

Abstract

The referee is an essential part of the codified form of association football that we know today. Nevertheless, this has not always been the case; whilst a referee, in some form, has been a requirement since codification in order for football matches to occur, referees have not always been central in the thought process of rule makers and those developing the game. This essay explores the evolution of the referee within Association Football and more specifically, the training, support and assessment practices that referees have received since the codification of Association Football in 1863. Therefore, this essay focuses on debates and input from governing bodies, such as the Football Association, FIFA and the Referees Associations specifically related to referees and their training, support and assessment as the association code of football continued to evolve.

Keywords: Referee, Training, Assessment, Association Football

Introduction

The evolution of referee training and assessment can be charted against a backdrop of associated and inter-related developments in Association Football. The provision of training and assessment for referees offered by governing bodies, such as the Football Association (FA) in England, UEFA and FIFA, and refereeing organisations such as the Referees Association (RA) has altered and advanced over time. This has been necessitated, in part, to the wider change evident in the game of Association Football which has embraced one major advancement after another, such as the formation of the FA Cup (1871), professionalisation of players (1885), formation of the Football League (1888), and latterly the abolition of the maximum wage for professional footballers (1961).

The codification of the association game of football at the Freemasons' Tavern in London on 26th October 1863 provides an initial backdrop for many of the decisions made by the FA during the period up until 1900. In order to understand fully the establishment and development of the referee within Association Football we must, initially, consider how the game has advanced and therefore conceptualise the evolving role of the referee in the codified form of Association Football. The referee has had to evolve and change with the game, but crucially, not always contiguously with the game itself.

This paper considers the development of training and assessments for referees over a concerted time period taking in the emergence of the referee up to the start of the 1960s. This is achieved through the use of documents such as FA and FIFA minutes, the Referees' Association trade publication and also relevant journal papers and texts. The developments in training and assessment throughout this time frame are essentially important in order to understand fully the changing role of the referee in England.

Emergence of the Referee

Before the formation of the FA the role of the ‘umpire’, as they were termed initially, and latterly ‘referee’ was somewhat removed from that which is known today. For example, some annual Shrove-matches, notably those at Derby and Scone, had ‘men of both sides attend to see fair play’ was done¹ and as early as 1841, in Bolton, an official awarded the game to the opposition because ‘his’ team was breaking the rules². There was an onus on the players themselves and over time the captains, to agree any disputes on the field of play. In the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of external control developed in school football and by 1847 there was an established practice of having two "umpires", to resolve disputes (As of May 28, 2013 on the Referees Association website). Despite these mentions of umpires in the public schools aberrant rules were being employed in different parts of the country outside the public schools and it appears that although many of these games were regulated and controlled by arbitrators they varied greatly in the amount of violence that they provoked³.

The formation of the Football Association in 1863 lends further insight into the attempt to constitute one set of rules. For umpires (at this time), there were fundamental problems with the rules that were being created by the Football Association and by the public schools before; umpires were often seen as an afterthought and therefore were in very real danger of becoming marginalised⁴. Moreover, the worry over this marginalisation was apparently deserved as during the initial process that led to the code of law being drawn up for a game in 1863, the umpire or referee was not given a single mention.

‘Umpires’ and ‘Referees’ in the Development of Association Football

The birth of the FA Challenge Cup in 1871 saw the inclusion of umpires in procedural matters⁵ as ‘neutrals’ were introduced to resolve the disputes between the team appointed umpires in later rounds of the F.A. Cup⁶. Because of this potential conflict, gradually referees were introduced who were required to act autonomously and by 1880 they had the power to

send players from the field of play who persistently infringed the Laws. Although these were actions that were available to the referee they still needed to be ratified by the agreement of the captains of both teams. Despite the fact that some of the early referees were, perhaps inevitably, public school teachers⁷, the 1870 Education Act resulted in an expansion of the number of working class pupils who were admitted to elementary schools and, as a consequence, an expansion of teacher training colleges⁸. Many of these teacher training colleges had Association Football teams⁹, with these teachers and attendees at the training colleges often the mainstay of early clubs in industrial areas.

The early years of the referee required relatively frequent involvement from the FA as they sought to establish the referees as the guardians of the laws of Association Football. There were several incidents involving referees that necessitated action and a response from the FA. An occurrence of encroachment by the crowd at Aston Villa in a cup tie versus Preston North End in 1888 meant the referee had to stop the match and the game was subsequently given to Preston North End. Furthermore, in the same set of minutes, a referee also reported the captain of Crewe Alexandra for insulting language in a cup tie against Swifts in Derby on 17th December 1887, and he was subsequently banned for two weeks¹⁰. These occurrences meant that a further meeting of the FA Council¹¹ outlined a proposal for law change, which was constructed to put before the International Board in which law 15 was to be amended, detailing that the referee has the power to stop a game whenever he sees fit or necessary to do so.

The amendments to law being made by the FA were gradually beginning to mean that there was more decision making and constitutional power afforded to the referee, however this power had not, as yet, crystallised itself to afford the referee complete control over the match. Referees in 1888 still had umpires and although these umpires were selected by the

referees for cup matches¹² there were also neutral or club umpires that were often nominated in other matches.

The initiation and development of league football ensured that the FA continued the transfer of power towards the referee. As a consequence, an addition to law 15 in April 1888 saw further power handed to the referee when it was decreed that if umpires from either side could not agree, or they were unable to make a decision, the referee would have the power to do so. Furthermore, the referee was also instructed to act as a timekeeper and given the ability to issue cautions and to ‘rule the offending player or players out of play’¹³, which in effect meant that they had the ability to send players from the field of play at their discretion. Moreover, by 1889 referees were permitted to award free kicks without appeals from the players and the introduction of the penalty kick followed in 1891 after a lengthy trial period¹⁴. Crucially, at this time, the award of the penalty kick was dependent on appeal to the referee and not the umpire¹⁵. This fundamental change in the laws of the game was a gradual process in the withdrawal of the umpire and the promotion of the roles and responsibilities of the referee¹⁶.

The inherent changes in the game of football, and to the referee as an arbitrator continued apace and consequently, by 1891, referees had moved onto the field of play from the sidelines, armed with a whistle, which had been introduced in 1878¹⁷, and were no longer acting as a time-keeper and a peace-maker between the two club-nominated umpires¹⁸. The enlargement of the role of ‘referee’ coincided with the demotion of ‘umpires’ to linesmen; The FA Council declared in their minutes in 1892 that ‘it is desirable that the positions of umpires should be abolished and that lines-men should be appointed, whose duties (subject to the referee), should be to decide when the ball is out of play, and which side has the “throw in”’¹⁹. This was drafted as a proposal, which was passed by the International Board, to delete

the term *'umpire'* and replace it with *'linemen'* and therefore update laws 10 and 12 of the rules of the game.

The move from umpires to linemen, to later become linesmen, not only gave the referee more direct decision making authority, without the need (if he so wished) to consult any other officials, it also meant that umpires had in effect become relatively powerless touch judges²⁰. Further developments ensued in the role and responsibilities of the referee; an 1895 ruling stated that linesmen were permitted to give the referee an opinion on the ball crossing the goal-line between the posts²¹ and specifically stated field markings were enshrined in the rules of the game in 1896²².

In effect the changes that had been implemented clearly represented a promotion for the referee. But whether the structures were in place at the time to train, assess and promote referees, and whether the individual referees themselves were adequately prepared for these significant changes are open to debate.

Support for Referees

The increasing importance and significance of the role of the referee within the game led to the formation of the Referees Association (RA) (London Branch) in 1893, and the introduction of training for referees utilising, the official F.A. handbook, which was an attempt at standardising the laws of the game and their application by arbitrators²³.

There were wide discrepancies between the applied Laws of the Game, laid down as the official rules, and the practice of numerous clubs in different parts of the country with the end result that, 'Many years were spent by the controlling bodies in attempts at self-discipline, and progress was slow'²⁴. The formation of the Referees' Association (London) was an attempt to speed up this progress. In a further attempt to ameliorate the perception of referees and to improve refereeing experience and knowledge, the Referees' Association (London) began production of the Referees' Chart in 1895, following a decision made by the

FA Council. Because of the increased importance of the decisions that referees were being asked to make, the FA had to turn their attention towards the training and support that referees were receiving within the game. The Referees' Chart, a code of rules for the guidance of umpires and referees, the first of its kind which attempted to address the need for standardisation within refereeing even at this early juncture. The then Vice President of the FA, William Pickford, was instrumental in getting the Referees' Society to produce "The Referees' Chart" for the 1895-96 season. It contained the 17 Laws of the game and was far more substantial than those drafted originally in 1863²⁵ giving the referee;

'...absolute power to award a free kick for every breach of the Laws that he sees, the penalty kick only excepted, whether there be an appeal from the player or not. Only in the case of a breach of Law 13 must he wait for an appeal before awarding a penalty kick, and even here he must award a penalty kick, with or without appeal, for a wilful trip²⁶.'

It was one of the last undertakings of The London Society of the Referees' Association as it ended its short but important existence in 1899, having given the referee some form of status and initiated many improvements²⁷. Despite these steps forward, this initial guidance given to the referee was skeletal, and it took eleven years for the next round of instructions to be released, although this did leave the referee better equipped to deal with the machinations of the game as it moved into the 20th century²⁸.

Need for Training and Criticism of Referees

By 1913 referees and those associated with refereeing were asking for more to be done by the authorities in terms of their training with referees' training not dealt with substantively in documentation of the time. Comments such as, '...first class referees are born not made, and if a referee fails to control a game satisfactorily let us put it down to the fact that he was not born a Knight of the Whistle'²⁹, can be viewed as some indication of feelings

at the time. Referees were depicted in newspapers, sometimes in a mocking or humorous fashion, and therefore were evidently a source of discussion amongst journalists and fans alike, as Figure 1 (The Athletic News, November 23, 1903) and Figure 2 (Sheffield Telegraph and Star Sports Special (Green'Un), March 14, 1908) depict.

Figure 1 here

Figure 2 here

The attitude that individuals either could or could not referee, by definition rendered the concept of training as a fleeting concern at best. Nevertheless, referees wanted further training. There are recorded statements noted in FA Referees' Committee minutes that started to ask for a more uniform approach towards the training and promotion of referees. In an attempt to achieve this, the Conference of County and District Association Referees, Secretaries and Representatives suggested;

'It was unanimously resolved that this Conference urge upon the Referees' Committee of the Football Association the necessity of investigating and considering the present methods adopted by the various affiliated Bodies for the training and promotion of

Referees with a view to formulating a definite scheme for adoption. The Committee decided that it was not desirable to formulate a definite scheme³⁰.

With reference to the idea of a definitive scheme for training and promotion, in 1909 Charles Sutcliffe, a former player and referee in the Football League, a member of the Football League Management Committee, later to become League President in 1936³¹ and, according to the Referees Association on their website, (as of April 29, 2013), president of the Referees' Union from 1908-1913 and 1919-1920, proposed that referees should be appointed to a league on a seasonal basis, rather than month by month. This proposal, which was accepted by the Football League Management Committee in 1909, meant that the list of referees for the Football League was set at the start of the season, subject to any necessary revision each month³², a procedure still followed in the modern game.

Referees also deemed that further support was necessary and requested a visible demonstration of this support from those in charge, notably the FA and the Football League, related to the increased exposure they were subjected to. Evidence, in 1913, suggests that referees were becoming 'sufficiently fed up with all the criticism and extra public scrutiny that they took the unprecedented step of sending a petition to the League, which was signed by 38 referees³³'. These referees' had been selected to officiate in the Football League, following the promotional structure that had been developed between the FA and latterly The Football League, although evidently they did not believe the support from these organisations was as unflinching as it might have been.

FIFA Congress and Refereeing in Europe

An example of this provision of support at European level for referees can be evidenced through a consideration of the FIFA minutes from 1913. The 10th annual FIFA congress was held in Copenhagen from 31st May until 1st June and featured discussions on refereeing. A motion was raised to move towards more international uniformity within the

refereeing of matches. The representative from Belgium at the congress proposed that in order to increase standardisation and uniformity in respect of the interpretation of the Laws of the Game, a refereeing congress should be organised. This was met with a great deal of conjecture and disagreement, in particularly from the English representative J. Lewis, who stated that he ‘considered such a congress a waste of time and money, although in England a referees union had been formed the conditions were no better than 25 years ago, many referees don’t even carefully read the Laws of the Game³⁴’. These views were supported by the Scottish representative H. S. McLauchlan, who agreed that even though Scotland had a long experience related to this issue, ‘...even at present there was no uniform interpretation of the Laws of the Game³⁵’.

The comments made by J. Lewis as the English representative can be explained in three possible ways. Firstly, that Lewis was being critical of referees per se and the standards he had observed; secondly, that he was being critical of some referees that did not take the vocation seriously; or thirdly, that Lewis was in fact dismissive of the suggestion from FIFA that those within England needed to subscribe to international standards and guidelines. Whatever the precise meaning of these comments recorded at the FIFA congress, there was an assertion pertaining to a wider issue in terms of a perceived lack of engagement with the Laws of the Game at a structural or governance level. This comment, and other subsequent comments at this annual congress also, outlines the regard in which refereeing was held within English and indeed international football. Moreover, after the initial comments concerning referees not reading the rules of the game, the president of FIFA stated that a circular would be sent out with regard to the rules of the game; if this did not work, it was proposed that the matter would be revisited by congress again at a later date.

The proposal received support from the Austrian representative, who wanted better control of referees in relation to the administration of the laws of the game. Furthermore, the

Russian representative believed that more good would come from ‘arranging friendly meetings of referees to discuss important matters.’ Finally, another English representative, F.J. Wall, ‘considered the question one for individual associations to deal with’ in their own country³⁶. Standardisation was evidently not something that was of particular interest to some countries within FIFA, although other countries did attach more importance to this concept.

This incident at an important FIFA meeting outlines the lack of support for referees in 1913. Nevertheless, the fact that these conversations were being aired within the relevant committees and governing bodies does demonstrate some acknowledgement that these issues at least warranted discussion. However, there was still a significant shift in thinking required before change could occur. Referees appeared to be an afterthought in the game at this point, yet there was a clear understanding, within the international game, if not in England, that refereeing was something with which governing bodies should be concerned. Despite this fact, in the period between the FIFA meeting in 1913 and 1938 such a conference had not occurred³⁷. This passage of such a lengthy period of time strongly suggests that, in the view of the FA, referees did not need formal, standardised training. It should also be noted at this juncture that this was not an issue confined to England; this was an international view.

1935 FA Memorandum and Guidance

Despite the lack of an international conference, the Referees’ Association website outlines that membership to the Referees’ Association continued to grow. Initial figures of just over 2,000 referees were reported in 1913, 2,795 referees in 1923 despite an initial post-war reduction, and 5,706 referee members in 1939 demonstrated a growing appetite for officiating (As of February 17, 2014). Furthermore, as Referee Association memberships grew, the FA issued a memorandum in 1935, which outlined 11 points, and can be regarded as comprehensive as any piece of guidance for referees to that date, other than the Referees’ Charts. The memorandum highlights ‘work of the referee’ and ‘judging intention’ as well as

'physical fitness' and provides expectations of the referee in terms of fitness. It must be noted, however, that this section of the memorandum comprises merely one paragraph and, aside from the suggestion that Football League clubs should allow referees to utilise their facilities the guidance on physical fitness is somewhat vague;

‘Every referee should train so as to be physically fit for his work. A player out of condition may prove to be a handicap for his team, but a referee out of condition may spoil the game for both teams. Leagues should encourage the physically fit Referee and should arrange for training facilities on the grounds of their clubs. Co-operation for this purpose should not be difficult. If a Referee is “up with the play” when infringements occur, players will seldom argue. His presence “on the spot” will prevent fouls and misconduct³⁸.’

The mention of fitness and training is a demonstration of the fact that referees had been given some direction, through the memorandum of what was expected of them. Nevertheless, there is little guidance as to exactly how the referee was supposed to achieve what was required. Aside from being directed to join local referee associations and advised that ‘instructional classes should be held and lectures given’ on the game generally, sparse structure and no real provision for training of the referee existed;

‘Referees should form themselves into National or Local Associations for mutual help, and every Referee should join an Association. Instructional classes should be held and lectures given on points of interest in the control and conduct of the game. Mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness, and attendance at meetings may be very helpful in giving a referee confidence and courage. Classes and lectures help a referee to study carefully, and to learn to act quickly. He is bound to glean something from the experiences – happy or otherwise – of his colleagues that will help him to arrive at a right and sensible interpretation of any problems put forward for solution. If Clubs have no one on their staff competent to instruct the players, any experienced local referee would willingly meet the players in order to teach and advise them as to the correct interpretation of the Laws of the Game and as to the legality of various methods of play³⁹.’

The attention afforded to the training of referees by the aforementioned memorandum prefigured further thought about the guidance and support referees were receiving. This thought process had not, at this point, transferred itself into measurable changes in the provision of referee training at any level of refereeing. Despite this, there were discussions related to the promotion structure through County FAs, with the Vice Chairman of the London Society, T. W. Annal, arguing that the FA, alongside the County FAs, should identify promising referees ‘with the same keenness as clubs exercise for playing talent⁴⁰’. The article continues to argue just how important the referee is within the game, stating that ‘...his office is worthy of consideration and support in his work. Times change, and even football must change with them⁴¹’.

The National Referees Conference 1946 – A Concerted Focus on Referee Training, Examination and Promotion

The realisation that refereeing was not keeping up with the professionalised element of Association Football at the elite end of the game was beginning to permeate the FA, FIFA and other governing bodies. However, the Referees’ Association had understood this much earlier, indeed the formation of the national Referees’ Association was founded on difficulties that referees were experiencing and some exposure of these issues in national and regional newspapers assisted in raising the profile of the problems. The issue was not confined to a lack of directed training that referees were receiving, rather the fact that during the Referees’ Association conference in Cheltenham in 1946 Stanley Rous, who was then Secretary of the Football Association, urged the Referees’ Association to focus on the recruitment of referees and also stated that it was the ‘...duty of the Association to find [these referees] and train them⁴²’.

The issue remained that there was very little guidance for the training of referees. As Rous himself stated during his address at the conference, the FA believed that it was up to the

Referees' Association to provide and organise this. The RA had little money or resources to be able to take on this responsibility and the organisations were still no nearer a uniform approach to referee training, classification and assessment. However, the RA did want some form of responsibility over the training and coaching of referees. An article by W. S. Turnbull Vice Secretary of the Northern division of the RA⁴³, argued that this should be the role of the RA and that such training should be delivered through the various Referees' Societies around England. However, there is no mention of how this might be achieved, or how it could be funded.

The conference concluded with a number of recommendations and agreements, all of which helped to shape the approach towards refereeing in the coming years by both the FA and the RA. All of the recommendations were relevant; however, those most related to the training and assessment of referees were as follows;

- 1. That instructional classes for candidates and referees should be established throughout the country, and the help of the R.A. be accepted in this. County Associations to be urged to afford the opportunity to candidates to officiate in junior matches prior to examination.*
- 2. That a uniform system of examination be evolved and prepared by a Central body appointed by the F.A. on which the R.A. should be represented.*
- 3. That the grading of a referee by a County Association should be accepted by all other Associations throughout the country.*
- 4. That worthy referees be offered accelerated promotion whether or not they apply for same⁴⁴.*

Amongst various proposed changes in refereeing it is worth noting that the conference abolished the starring of Class 1 referees, something which had been started in 1931 by the FA as a suggested method of identifying the best referees nominated on the lists submitted to them by the County FAs⁴⁵. The conference was a vital step forward in the relationship between the FA and RA and also in terms of recognising some of the areas of improvement necessary in refereeing. For example, there was recognition that a uniform exam system was

needed for referees, that the grading of a referee should be the same throughout the country and that there should be some consideration of accelerated promotion, where appropriate. Nevertheless, by December 1947 a uniform examination for referees was still not a reality⁴⁶.

The National Referees Conference of 1946 does, it could be argued, provide a focusing event or focal point in terms of the approach to refereeing. There was considerable emphasis placed on training, examination and grading of referees, something which had historically been lacking. Alongside, and even prior to this conference, it is worth considering other advancements and changes related to referees and the approach to their training, assessment and promotion. If the 1946 conference served as a means to focus the attention of the footballing community, and particularly the FA, in England, upon refereeing, other changes and developments around this time were just as important.

Referee Training, Assessment and Promotion 1945-1950

As the game of Association Football evolved, embracing principles associated with globalisation, commercialisation and commodification, referees were becoming more accountable as a consequence. Furthermore, by the end of the Second World War in 1945 the game had been professional for over 60 years, albeit with sizeable gaps that would have affected the development of the game, attributable to both the First and Second World War. The quality of the training that players were receiving, along with their wages, was steadily increasing and referees and their supporting organisations should have been ensuring that they were keeping pace with these changes. However, the reality of this was very different. By the end of the Second World War the amateur ideal, upon which the FA was founded appeared a somewhat antiquated notion. However it seems that this outmoded approach was still taken towards refereeing and training, certainly when compared to other areas of Association Football. Although courses were originating, an example of which is the course organised by the FA for the County FA representatives in 1947 related to the recruitment,

training and examination of referees, where examination was discussed and plans put forward⁴⁷, they were a relatively new phenomenon in terms of refereeing and therefore these courses were somewhat scarce.

A publication of 'The Football Referee' acknowledges that, by April 1948, there was consideration given to referee training and assessment. It was detailed that a proposal put forward by the FA on refereeing and referee assessment outlined that each League Management committee, at whatever level of football, would adopt a system of reporting on referees similar to that employed by the Football League⁴⁸. This meant the FA was introducing assessment for referees by clubs, in the form of a numerical score, at all levels of the game. This was intended to identify the best referees and also track progress and highlight any potential issues arising over the course of a season. Moreover, the recommendations also detail that *'...later on, it might be possible to provide "assessors" of Referees, but reports in the form now favoured by the Football League should normally give fair assessment of a Referees' ability⁴⁹'*.

Furthermore, a related issue being considered by the FA in 1948 was the appointment and promotion of referees and a subsequent memorandum was issued to consider the career pathways for referees at this time, with the draft proposals listed for consideration by the FA, the Football League and other senior leagues. Prior to this proposal, which was subsequently accepted, there was a somewhat fragmented system in place with little transparency in terms of referee promotion. Indeed, the memorandum itself recognises this fact and states the need to *'...outline a new procedure of the appointment and advancement of Referees, which will overcome weaknesses in the present method⁵⁰'*. The questions over how referees were graded, and the inconsistencies over their subsequent promotion and placement at matches, were starting to be addressed.

Additionally, refereeing conferences were becoming more common, even if they were infrequent and therefore there was some consideration of standards and training requirements. FIFA began to organise International Conferences and a Conference on Refereeing, held in London in 1948 and organised by the FA alongside FIFA, was attended by delegates from 28 different countries⁵¹. The conference was the first of its kind and was described as, “*a real beginning*⁵²” regarding referee training and development.

Despite the issues related to referee promotion being considered, at this point there was very little in the form of guidance over referee’s training and how they might improve their performance in a practical way. This can be evidenced through the examination of an address given by A. W. Barton at the Referees’ Association conference in 1949, where Barton (a former FA Cup final referee himself) was sent as a representative of the FA Secretary. Barton outlined four main points in his address relating to refereeing; he asked the question whether a referee should remain in Class 1 even after giving up officiating in Senior County matches, he also stated that a better method of promotion was needed, a better method of assessing the ability of the individual referee, and perhaps, most crucially, given the context of this paper, Barton stated that there needed to be an improvement in the standard of refereeing and that this was still an aim to be pursued⁵³. In 1949 many of these issues raised and outlined by Barton were not new concepts, but were areas that were central to the thinking of governing bodies related to refereeing as the twentieth century progressed.

In order for these changes to be effected within refereeing, the FA were promoting the need for representatives from the RA to become members of County FAs. Stanley Rous (then Secretary of the FA) confirmed this in a letter of correspondence with J.C. Durman the Honourable General Secretary of the RA in 1948, ‘*...in order that the interests of Referees in such matters is being watched*⁵⁴’. However, the RA wanted to be represented at the FA and on the Referees’ Committee of the FA. This was something that, although acknowledged by

the FA, was not put into practice and therefore led to the RA feeling that they did not have a voice or significant influence at the FA⁵⁵.

Nevertheless, this did not prevent the FA from entering into a discourse with the RA over the training of referees. Stanley Rous wrote to the RA in 1950, stating that there needed to be a move to ensure more uniformity in referee promotion and classification, something which all County Associations could follow to prevent too much variation in standards⁵⁶. Furthermore, evidence that these issues were being considered within the FA, something which Rous' letter alludes to, shows some movement regarding what may previously have seemed an entrenched view of the FA on referees. Reports were being submitted to the FA from the Football League and others on the performance of referees and their assistants and some consideration was also given to assessors of referees and their mechanisms for reporting their findings, such as a uniform template for them to use from the FA and Southern League⁵⁷.

Referee Grading, Assessment and Appointments: 1950-1960

Alongside the developments in the club-led assessment system for referees, adaptations were made to the grading of referees. It was suggested that referees were split into Class 1, Class 2 and Class 3 categories, with the lists submitted by the County FA to the FA annually⁵⁸. However, the RA wanted a more detailed approach to this matter and submitted their own recommendations to the FA determining referee promotion.

The FA held conferences throughout England during the summer of 1951 to examine the views of County FAs and the different leagues throughout England regarding the introduction of a uniform system of grading and promotion for referees. The RA was asked for its views on these proposed changes and subsequently submitted these views to the FA. The RA proposed more categories than Class 1, 2 and 3 forwarded initially by the FA, and included a 2x grade, which was intended to delineate referees over the age of 50 that were

previously registered as Class 2 referees, but who were not submitted as part of the annual list to the FA due to their age. These proposals were considered by the FA and responded to in a letter from Stanley Rous, detailing that the Referees' Committee at the FA considered the current regulations adequately covered the points raised by the RA and that '*local conditions required that the regulations should be flexible*⁵⁹'. Eventually the initial proposals first made by the FA in 1951 were accepted and indeed were still in place in the 1958-1959 season⁶⁰.

Witty does outline how this scheme worked in conjunction with the Football League, and observes that the achievement of reaching the Class 1 banding did not necessarily mean that a referee would take charge of a Football League match after promotion. Referees were further graded through a scheme that the FA had negotiated with the senior leagues in England. The FA decided that a Class 1 referee would act as a referee in certain types of matches at level D initially, approximately twice a month, and then as a linesman in matches at the next higher level, C, on alternate Saturdays. The structure then suggests that the referee progressed by achieving referee appointments in level C and, subsequently, acting as a linesman in level B. When the individual achieved appointments as a referee at level B, which covered leagues such as the Southern or Central League and comparable leagues in different regions, he could then be selected as a linesman in Football League matches. Furthermore, any vacancies on the Football League list of referees were filled from the linesman's list – the referee would then achieve movement up to level A⁶¹.

Despite the introduction of this pathway for referee promotion, there were signs that referees generally were not enamoured with the method of assessing their performances in order for them to progress through the levels to officiate eventually in the Football League. The Blackburn Referees' Association stated, through the Referees' Association, that they wanted the FA to '*...consider the abolition of reports on referees by clubs and to consider a scheme whereby ex-referees shall be appointed to this duty*⁶²'. This statement also argues that

there was no ‘official’ marking of referees from within the refereeing fraternity in 1953.

Nevertheless, there were the beginnings of assessment from within refereeing; Essex County FA commended the Referees’ Associations within the county in their annual report for their *‘Coaching classes, to help prospective candidates prepare for the examination’* and *‘...the panel of Referee Assessors – men who spend their Saturday afternoons in the open, whatever the weather, watching matches in which the referee is a candidate for promotion – has again been in action⁶³’*.

This mention of referee assessments from within the refereeing community can be related to the application for promotion of referees. This was not achieved through a regular assessment by an ex-referee or qualified assessor at every match, rather the matches observed would be sporadic, ad-hoc and dependent on the stage of promotion of the referee in question. The regular assessment of referees by an ex-referee was something which would only become part of the assessment process in elite level football in the coming years. However, it did demonstrate an understanding of the virtues of assessment from within refereeing. At the same time questions were being raised as to the validity of the current selection and promotion of referees, with misgivings over whether an examination on the Laws of the Game was enough; in fact the concept of a personality test for referees was discussed by those within refereeing themselves⁶⁴. Prior to this there were issues considered over the range and stringency of the examinations that referees were required to undertake in order to move through the system. Furthermore, it was also highlighted that since the war, due primarily to a shortage of candidates, the initial examination for referees, had been little more than an enquiry into the candidates’ knowledge of the Laws of the Game. It was stressed that *‘...this course, if pursued, will do no good to anyone⁶⁵’*.

Referees were calling for greater stringency and a more transparent structure around the recruitment and examination process. Indeed, despite the inception and administration of

some courses for referees, this training was all at the elite level and there was nothing for referees trying to move through the system. The FA were running refresher courses in other areas related to football, such as coaching, but crucially not in refereeing and not for referee instructors. This led the Referees' Association to ask whether, '*...the Football Association might be persuaded to put up a thousand or two for running courses, on a county basis with nominations from County F.A.s and Referees' Societies, particularly for instructors, for it is not everyone, even the most knowledgeable, who can impart instruction that will strike home*⁶⁶'. By 1951 referees were beginning to question the provision of training and support that they were receiving and the Referees' Association was at the forefront of these suggestions. Moreover, it seems that in 1952 the FA was not instigating any form of training for those that trained the referees throughout the country. Courses were run it seems, but only at '*tip-top level – nothing for the average man. Nothing for the painstaking people who, all over the country, are handling coaching and instructional classes*⁶⁷'.

There had been courses nationally for a select few referee instructors. A letter written by the then Honourable General Secretary of the RA, W. R. Rodgers, suggests that although the instructional courses organised by the FA at Bisham Abbey in 1947, 1957 and Lilleshall in 1953 were welcome and well received the courses also revealed '*...a serious lack of uniformity in the examination of candidates and also in the promotion and classification of referees*⁶⁸'. These were all areas that required attention as refereeing developed in the late 1950s.

Assessors, Training Courses for Referees and Referee Fitness

Despite the lack of direct provision of training for referees and referee instructors in the early 1950s the FA was, nonetheless, sending individuals from their Referees' Committee to view referee performances in the FA Cup. The members were asked to attend and view the games in the sixth round proper of the Challenge Cup and report back on the handling of the

game by the referees in question, with a total of four members of the committee appointed to undertake this duty⁶⁹. In addition to this scrutiny there is also the first mention in the FA minutes⁷⁰ regarding the first of what were to become annual courses for referee instructors, that began in 1958, although there had been a FIFA organised Referee Instructor course in Macolin, which a delegate from the FA attended⁷¹. The fact that these instructor courses had now started was an important milestone in terms of refereeing in England. It now meant that referees were being guided by instructors that were themselves being trained for the first time to deliver educational content to referees at varying levels. Furthermore, this also meant that by the late 1950s the FA was giving explicit direction to referees, concerning how they should oversee the game, through these trained instructors.

There is further evidence that the FA was beginning to approach the training, assessment and instruction of referees more rigorously. Following the first international conference on refereeing in 1948, there were subsequent mentions of further international conferences in the FA minutes. A report on referees' courses/conferences in 1957 outlined that there were the FA Regional Referees' Conferences, the FA Referees' Course at Bisham Abbey from 28th July - 2nd August, the French FA Summer School for Referees from 5th - 7th July and the FIFA Referees' Course at Macolin from 5th-7th August⁷². The number of courses and the breadth of coverage of these courses in terms of referee delegates across the country and internationally was certainly something that was new within refereeing and which was increasing.

A further referee's course organised at Bisham Abbey in 1958, which was attended by 31 delegates from County FAs and Service Associations, was intended for those that wanted to instruct new referee candidates – in effect 'teaching the teachers'. The course utilised practical demonstration and also BBC films of international and domestic matches and incidents therein to assist the instruction of the candidates⁷³. A further course was scheduled

for representatives of County FAs and the Referees' Association in 1959 after the success of the course in 1958⁷⁴. However, a cursory glance at the FA Instructional Committee minutes from 1957 and the summer programme of courses, can demonstrate that refereeing was still some way behind other areas in terms of the frequency of training that was being offered. Inspection of the training delivered in the summer of 1957 reveals an Administrative Conference for Secretarial Staff, coaching related courses (Trainers and Coaches, Qualifying Course and Youth Course), a Senior Players and Schoolmasters Course, a C.C.P.R. Course and a Course and Conference for Referees⁷⁵. Therefore of all courses delivered in that summer period refereeing accounted for only one, whereas coaching and related areas accounted for five of the courses delivered.

Nevertheless, at approximately the same time as these courses, clear instruction was given from the Referees Association to their members regarding the importance of attendance at physical training and instructional meetings. There had been little attention paid to the fitness and physical capabilities of a referee up to this point. The game at the professional level was developing rapidly and there were signs of a reaction to this from the Referees' Association, the FA and also FIFA. Moreover, the Referees' Association went further to warn referees that *'...some referees have not done their duty in this respect which is so important towards ensuring uniformity of actions and decisions. The Board, realising the importance of this, are determined to ensure that ALL referees attend at these sessions and a record will be kept of the attendance of each referee. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against offending referees'*⁷⁶.

Training was being administered, although these initial moves into the instruction and training of referees were 70-75 years after the professionalisation of Association Football. Moreover, the changes in football more widely were continuing apace and would ensure that

any steps forward in relation to referee training would need to be maintained in order to keep up.

Conclusions

As the 1960s approached the increased attention that referee training, promotion and assessment had received was becoming more evident. 1958 had seen an FA instructor's course for those involved in training referees that had included a basic syllabus, which had been put together and subsequently circulated to all County FAs and many referees' societies⁷⁷. A preceding course for instructors was also held in 1959, which considered the improvement in standard of the syllabus delivery for referee training and also the concern with uniformity of method in terms of the delivery of the content to referees⁷⁸. These courses were presided over by Walter Winterbottom, the FA Director of Coaching, and hence were overseen by the FA. However, the focus of the FA in the early 1960s was on uniformity of decisions amongst referees, something which was obviously important in terms of the professional game, but also across all other levels.

In 100 years the training of referees had developed from a negligible state to an area of football that was demonstrating consideration as the game developed and progressed. As professionalisation was legalised by the FA and The Football League became established, the game evolved rapidly, without simultaneously including the referee. Nevertheless, there are pertinent milestones which have been discovered throughout this essay that highlight particular areas of development in refereeing. The introduction of The Education Act of 1870, the formation of the Referees Association in the 1890s, the Referees Chart of 1895, the 10th annual FIFA congress in 1913, the 1935 FA Memorandum and Guidance for referees and The National Referees Conference of 1946, have all contributed to significant changes in refereeing over time. Furthermore the importance of the emergence of training and assessment standards, fitness and physical condition, as well as examinations, classification

and grading, have been discussed in detail as officiating evolved during the twentieth century until the 1960s.

This essay has demonstrated that refereeing, at all levels, was something of an afterthought in the development of Association Football and by the turn of the 1960s, with no regular training mechanisms in place, regular conferences or indeed consistent guidance on training and performance, referees were still the poor relations of football in England. By 1960 football had been codified for 97 years, professionalised for 75 years and had a structured, national Football League for 72 years. Arguably, this was a considerable amount of time that referees were now required to play catch-up; the move from the side-lines to the centre of the pitch had proven to be a process fraught with difficulties.

Notes on Contributor

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1. Harvey, *Football*, 84.
 2. Harvey, *An Epoch*, 56.
 3. Harvey, *Football*, 84-85.
 4. Thomson, *The Man in Black*, 21.
 5. *Ibid.*, 23.
 6. Russell, *Football and the English*, 31.
 7. Mangan and Hickey, *Pioneers and their Influence*, 667; Mangan and Hickey, *Keeping the Ball Rolling*, 750.
 8. McArdle, *From Boot Money*, 16.
 9. Birley, *Land of sport*, 268.

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10. FA Council minutes, January 14, 1888.
 11. FA Council minutes, February 06, 1888.
 12. FA Council minutes, November 20, 1887.
 13. FA Council minutes, April 15, 1888.
 14. Giulianotti, *Football*, 6.
 15. Thomson, *The Man in Black*, 26-29.
 16. Russell, *Football and the English*, 31.
 17. Green, *A Diary*, 22.
 18. Inglis, *League Football*, 14; Giulianotti, *Football*, 6.
 19. FA Council minutes, May 27, 1892.
 20. Thomson, *The Man in Black*, 38-39.
 21. Witty, *Referees and Linesman*, 193.
 22. Witty, *The Laws*, 160.
 23. Mangan and Hickey, *Keeping Control*, 730.
 24. *Ibid.*, 730.
 25. Davies and Carosi, *100 Years*, para 3.
 26. FA Council minutes, January 16, 1895.
 27. The Referees Association, *Background and Formation*, paras. 4-5.
 28. Thomson, *The Man in Black*, 43.
 29. A low birth rate, November 18, 1912, 6.
 30. FA Referees' Committee minutes, July 05, 1913.
 31. Tomlinson, *North and South*, 31-32.
 32. Sutcliffe et al, *The Story*, 15.
 33. Inglis, *League Football*, 77.
 34. FIFA Annual Congress minutes, June 01, 1913.
 35. *Ibid.*
 36. *Ibid.*

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37. *International Corner*, August, 1938, 3.
 38. FA memorandum for the guidance of referees and linesmen, January 1935.
 39. *Ibid.*
 40. *Annal, Professional Football*, February, 1938, 7.
 41. *Ibid.*, 7.
 42. *Cheltenham Conference*, September 1946, 3.
 43. *Turnbull, Rally Round*, March 1947, 2.
 44. Brief account of the conference between representatives of the Football Association and The Referees' Association, December, 1945, 2.
 45. FA Referees Committee minutes, June, 01, 1931.
 46. Points of Motion for Conference, December, 1947, 7.
 47. *A Kindly Gesture*, April-May 1953, 1.
 48. The appointment and promotion of referees, April 1948, 8.
 49. *Ibid.*, 8
 50. FA Council minutes, December, 13, 1947.
 51. Green, *The History*, 470.
 52. *Ibid.*, 470.
 53. Address by Dr. A. W. Barton (Sheffield), June, 1949, 4.
 54. *The Football Referee*, December 1948, p. 7.
 55. Colwell, Elite level refereeing, 202.
 56. Home Counties conference, August 1950, 6.
 57. *Ibid.*, 7.
 58. FA Referees' Committee minutes, February, 26, 1951.
 59. *Words of wisdom*, December-January, 1953-1954, 3.
 60. Witty, The organization of referees, 200.
 61. *Ibid.*, 202.
 62. Annual conference, August-September, 5.

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63. Ibid., 1.
 64. *Some thoughts*, May, 1955, 1.
 65. The examination, April 1951, 2.
 66. Certified instructors, April, 1951, 3.
 67. Ibid., 3.
 68. Rogers, Request for representation, July, 1958, 11.
 69. FA Referees' Committee minutes, May 03, 1957.
 70. FA Referees' Committee minutes, December 09, 1957.
 71. FA Referees' Committee minutes, May 03, 1957.
 72. Ibid.; FA Referees' Committee minutes, September 23, 1957.
 73. Rae, *Teaching the Teachers*, November, 1958, 6-7.
 74. FA Referees' Committee minutes, December 09, 1957.
 75. FA Instructional Committee minutes, May 03, 1957.
 76. Physical Training, May, 1957, 16-17.
 77. Referee Instructors course, November, 1959, 18.
 78. Ibid., 18.

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